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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: SUPPORTING AMENDMENT OF THE ISAF
OPLAN TO EXPAND CN AUTHORITIES

Classified By: EUR Acting DAS Nerissa Cook
for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (U) This is a CORRECTED action request. Please see paragraph 4. CORRECTIONS: demarche should be delivered only to NATO Allies and points in paragraph 4 are classified as Confidential/Releasable to NATO.

¶2. (C) BACKGROUND: On June 11, Supreme Allied Commander-Europe (SACEUR), U.S. General Craddock, proposed to NATO Defense Ministers an amendment to the Counternarcotics Annex of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Operations Plan (OPLAN) to authorize ISAF forces to interdict narcotics production and trafficking facilities where such action would offer a direct military advantage. Secretary Gates and then-Ambassador Nuland spoke out strongly in support of the amendment, and in response the North Atlantic Council (NAC) requested advice from NATO Military Authorities. In August, the NAC received recommendations that supported expanding ISAF's current authorities, citing the link between the narcotics industry and the insurgency. These recommendations are now stalled in NATO's Military Committee, where objections from key Allies are blocking an agreement that would allow the amendments to go before the NAC for final decision. Progress can only be achieved at a higher level, namely at a meeting of NATO Chiefs of Defense on September 12, 2008, in Brussels.

¶3. (C) The UK is planning a demarche to key Allies (Washington, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Ankara, Ottawa, Tallinn, The Hague, Budapest) in support of amending the OPLAN to grant ISAF interdiction authorities, but in a manner that would significantly limit ISAF's flexibility (the U.S. favors a broader approach). The UK seeks to set conditions on interdiction operations based on the availability of intelligence demonstrating a clear nexus between a specific counternarcotics target and the counterinsurgency campaign. Such a requirement could effectively paralyze ISAF interdiction operations due to the need for legally "iron clad" evidence.

¶4. (C/REL NATO) ACTION REQUEST: Action Addressees are requested to approach senior-level government officials, civilian and military, to urge support for SACEUR's recommendation to amend the Counternarcotics Annex of the ISAF OPLAN to authorize ISAF forces to interdict narcotics production and trafficking facilities. Post should send a front-channel response slugged for EUR/RPM and SCA/A by September 12, 2008. Posts should draw from the following points:

-- Proceeds from the narcotics trade are an important source of funds for insurgents in Afghanistan who conduct attacks on NATO and Afghan troops as well as Afghan civilians.

-- In short, there is a direct link between the drug trade and the insurgency.

-- Consequently, SACEUR has requested an expansion of ISAF authorities to allow counternarcotics interdiction missions.

-- For clarity, there is no proposal that ISAF troops should be employed in eradication operations.

-- The recent UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report on Crop Production in Afghanistan reinforces the correlation between insecurity and poppy cultivation, reporting that 98 percent of Afghanistan's poppy production now occurs in the most insecure areas of south and southwestern Afghanistan.

-- UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa recently addressed the NAC and offered his strong support for greater NATO engagement on counternarcotics, mentioning a number of areas where NATO could play an expanded role in, inter alia, destroying high-value targets (labs, markets, convoys), seizing precursor chemicals, and working to enhance provincial and border security in high poppy and opiate-transit provinces.

-- Integration of counter-narcotics interdiction activities into ISAF's campaign would be a force multiplier in this challenging fight against the drug trade, which funds violence and instability, fuels the insurgency, and undermines legitimate economic development and governance.

-- If the Military Committee (MC) cannot agree on its advice to the NAC in response to SACEUR's request, then the NAC should deal with the request without that advice. We cannot allow obstructionism in the MC to indefinitely delay a response.

-- We urge your government to support expanding ISAF's authorities to conduct counternarcotics interdiction through an amendment to the CN Annex of the OPLAN, in line with SACEUR's request.

-- While eliminating the trade in illicit narcotics is an Afghan responsibility, Afghan authorities currently lack, and will continue to lack in the near future, the capacity themselves to combat trafficking in narcotics.

-- ISAF interdiction operations would fill a critical gap until such time as the Afghan security forces have a more developed capacity to discharge these responsibilities effectively.

-- In amending the OPLAN, we should avoid qualifiers that might restrict commanders' ability to act in response to a threat to their forces or to enhance force protection. Authority should rest within the theater. To address the issue of national caveats, the broader counternarcotics authorities should be structured in such a way as to allow nations to opt into them (rather than opt out).

-- Currently there is no deterrent to engaging in the trade. This amendment will help provide a deterrent and thereby hamper funding of insurgent activities.

15. POINT OF CONTACT: Department appreciates Post's assistance in assuring the success of this critical requirement. The point of contact for this cable is Chris Dorle, EUR/RPM, 202-646-7293.
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